

Lead-Safe Child Care

Please be advised that programs for preschool aged children need to be inspected for potential lead paint hazards and found to be in compliance with the Lead Poisoning Control Act.

To implement this policy, Child Care Licensing staff will be evaluating potential lead hazards as part of their initial and renewal inspection visits. Using a "Potential Lead Hazard Rating" form, they will determine whether there is a need for a full inspection by a qualified lead inspector. There will be **no cost to providers** if a full lead inspection is deemed necessary by your licensing worker. If lead paint hazards are found, however, any abatement costs will be the provider's responsibility.

Facilities built after 1978 are exempt from any lead safety inspection. Programs serving only children over the age of five (5) are also exempt.

How do children become lead-poisoned and why is it a problem for day cares?

Children can get lead poisoning at home or in a day care facility by ingesting (eating) or inhaling (breathing) lead particles. Lead may be found in paint, dust, soil, and water. Small amounts of lead may be harmful to the developing brain and nervous system of young children, infants, and fetuses. Children under the age of 6 are the most vulnerable. Lead poisoning can cause developmental delays, behavior problems, and learning disabilities. These effects can be permanent and irreversible.

If my building has lead-based paint, do I have to remove it all to be lead safe?

Lead-based paint is a hazard only if it is peeling, chipping, cracking or on a friction surface that creates lead dust. You do not need to remove all the lead-based paint to be lead safe, but you do need to make sure painted surfaces are kept in good repair and dust around doors and windows is cleaned frequently. Beginning in 1978 lead was no longer added to paint manufactured for use in the home. If your daycare was constructed in 1978 or later, it is unlikely that your building has lead-based paint.

How can I make my child care facility lead-safe?

There are some basic cleaning and maintenance steps that you can take to create a lead safe environment in your daycare. First, you need to make sure all painted surfaces are in good condition; this means that paint should not be peeling, flaking, cracking. This includes the paint on the exterior of the building. If you will be repairing any painted surfaces, do not power sand or use a heat gun to remove paint. Be sure to dampen any painted surfaces before hand sanding or scraping. This will prevent lead dust from spreading through the air.

Always keep all children, pets and toys away from the work area! And remember, never eat, drink, or smoke when working with lead-contaminated paint, dust or soil! Be sure not to spread lead-contaminated paint chips or dust into other areas of your day care. Also, wash lead-contaminated work clothes separately. In 1997, repainting, renovation, or remodeling occurred in the homes of more than half the children identified as lead-poisoned in Maine within the six months prior to the diagnosis.

Next, you need to thoroughly clean all painted surfaces, window areas, and floors. Any loose paint and dust should be swept up or vacuumed with a HEP A-filter vacuum only. *Do not use a normal household vacuum or shop vac - these will spread the lead contamination!* Double-bag any sweepings or vacuum filters to prevent the dust from spilling out of the trash. Next, thoroughly wash all surfaces. You need to use an all-purpose detergent, and follow this cleaning by wet wiping all surfaces with clean water. Lead was added to paint to make it stick, and this double washing is needed to remove the lead dust from these surfaces.

Finally, cover bare soil with gravel, mulch, or sod. Plant grass or bushes so children can not play in dirt that may have lead in it.

By taking these steps you will minimize the amount of lead paint dust and lead paint chips that children may be exposed to in your daycare.

How do I stay lead-safe?

To stay lead-safe, you can take steps to eliminate the sources of lead dust and lead paint chips. These steps may include "interim controls", "abatement" and "essential maintenance practices". Interim controls are actions that you take to temporarily minimize the potential for exposure of children to lead dust, lead paint chips, and water with lead in it. Some examples of interim controls include: planing doors and putting channels into windows to prevent rubbing that creates lead dust; fencing off from the children's outside play area soil that contain high lead; and providing bottled water for drinking and cooking. Abatement includes actions that will permanently eliminate exposure to the source of lead. This includes such things as: removal of lead-based paint; replacement of windows, doors and trim that have lead-based paint; and paving over or removal of soil with high lead levels. Essential maintenance practices is a plan of routine cleaning and paint repair to prevent the build-up of dangerous levels of lead dust and paint chips.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on screening children for lead poisoning or on the health effects of lead poisoning, please contact your doctor, your local public health nurse; or the Department of Human Services Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 287-4311.

Licensed lead inspectors offer lead inspection services that identify where lead-based paint and lead hazards are in your building. Risk assessors can also perform lead inspections, and can provide you with options for addressing any lead hazards that are identified. Lead inspectors and risk assessors are the only professionals who can issue lead-safe certificates. Lead abatement contractors are contractors who are specially trained to eliminate lead hazards without creating an unsafe environment while they do their work. To get a list of licensed lead inspectors, risk assessors and lead abatement contractors, or for more information on lead-safe certificates and essential maintenance practices, please contact the Department of Environmental Protection Lead Licensing & Enforcement Program at 287-2651.